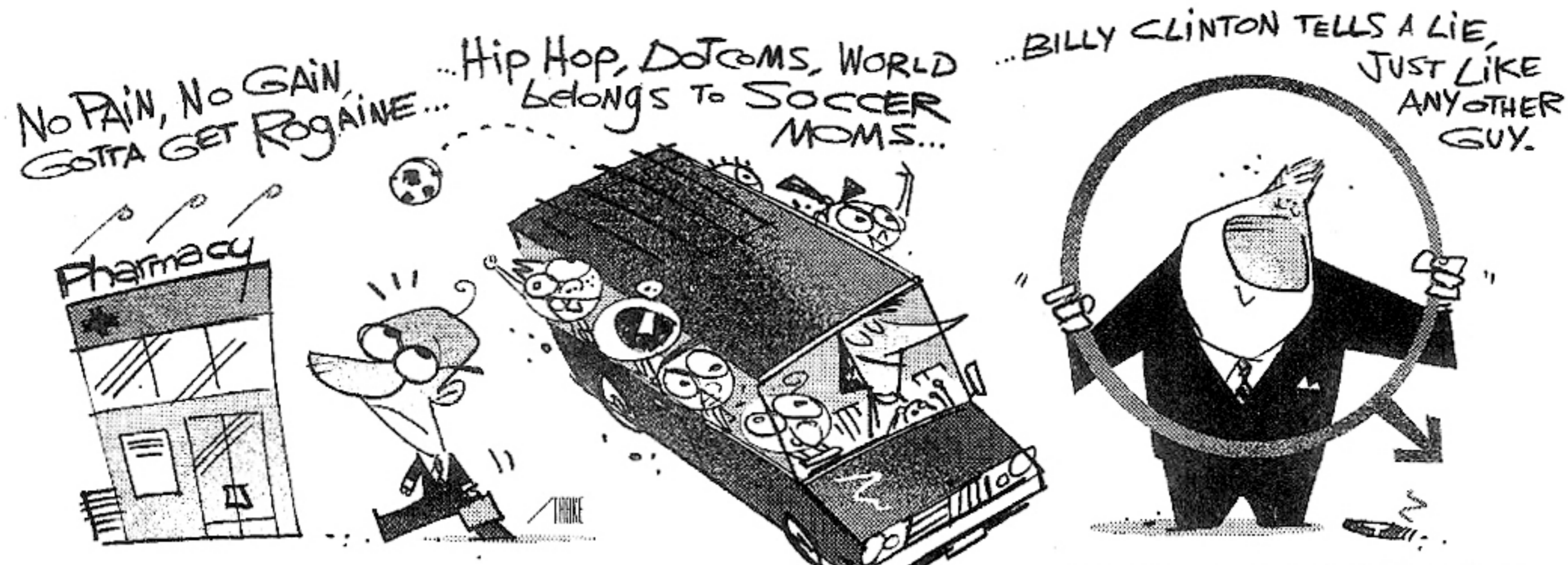


The Style Invitational

Week XXV: Finish the Fire



This Week's Contest was suggested by J.J. Gertler of Arlington, who points out that an entire decade has passed since Billy Joel wrote his anthem to world misery, "We Didn't Start the Fire." With remarkable economy, Joel deftly summarized the years of his life in a few short lines. Printed elsewhere on

this page are the original lyrics covering the years 1961-89. But what about the '90s? That's your challenge. Finish the song, from 1990 to the present, in Joel's quirky rhythm and rhyme, and in a maximum of four lines. The first-prize winner gets a genuine Elvis-stamp watch, a \$25 value.

The first runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-Shirt. The Uncle's Pick wins the yet-to-be-designed but soon-to-be-coveted "The Uncle Loves Me" T-Shirt. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com, or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week XXV, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. The deadline is Monday, July 24. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and a daytime or evening telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the message field. Entries will be judged on the basis of humor and originality, and all become the property of The Washington Post. Editors reserve the right to edit entries for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK XXI,

in which you were asked to write a food review for The Washington Post in the style of a famous author. There were six topics: a Quarter Pounder With Cheese, SweetTARTS, vanilla ice cream, escargots, poached salmon in tarragon butter and vacuum-sealed smoked beef rectum.

◆ Second Runner-Up—
Upton Sinclair:

It all begins in the slaughterhouse. Pools of fetid fluid, sometimes ankle deep when the drains are clogged, make the footing treacherous. A skilled butcher can strip the meat from the bone faster than the eye can catch. And if, as often is the case, he makes a mistake and takes off his thumb, no one is overly concerned, and your Quarter Pounder With Cheese will just be that much tastier, profits that much higher.
(Russell Beland, Annandale)

◆ First Runner-Up—
William Shakespeare:

Her neck's a column white, and colours fair
Upon her cheek proclaim'd virtue within.
No vitamins or fat would I find there,
But sugar, fructose, sugar yet again.
Her sweetness does e'er lend the poor girl grace.
Although the wench must bear the name of "tart."
My breath came short, my pulse increas'd its
pace,
That fiery humour, Love, had seized my heart.
Perhaps the heart just says I've had my fill
Of sugar in the blood, and yet to tear
Her wrapping off I do continue still,
'Til she's like Lady Eve, with naught to wear.
I love SweetTARTS; now with th' pox I rot;
Dentistry's still bad, so that's my lot.
(Keeley Schell, Fairfax)

◆ And the winner of the
smoked beef rectum—
Cole Porter:

If your gal is curvy
And the mood is all hors
d'oeuvre-y
And you're nervy for the
prelude's to-and-fro
You could deftly unshell her
With some Oysters Rockefeller
But slip her the es-car-gots.
[bridge]
Strapless stunners in Manhattan
All appreciate a pat in
Just the right place,
The Rainbow Room, they say!
When the first wine is uncorked
There is something they want
forked.
Slip her escargots,
The fore before the play!
With some garlic and some
butter
You will find that creeper utterly
delicious when on lips you let it
glow!
It's the quo before the quid
And the way to grease the id
When you slip her the
es-car-gots!
(Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

◆ Honorable Mentions—

Miss Manners: The first rule in eating an unusual food, such as escargots, is to avoid making others feel uncomfortable. For this reason, it is decidedly rude to talk to your escargots, or to give the individual snails names. Avoid saying things like, "Oh, you're a big one, I think I'll name you Patricia. Would you like a little salt, Patricia? No? Very well, then!"
(Russell Beland, Annandale)

Ernest Hemingway: In the evenings we would sit at the little tables near Dupont Circle and wedge matchbooks under the uneven legs and finish many *botas*, and the *camareri* would bring the big fish. They would flay him just so, pink flesh like a wound still wet and quivering, and then we knew that strong men had brought him down. At first the fish is not there and then the fish is there, open mouth like the big mortar craters we saw near Valencia, and you shoot him on the rise with the Mannlicher and he stops, learning to die well. They would bring him to the little table anointed with butter, but the women with their fingers, being women, would rub him with tarragon, as women do.
(Robert J. McManus, Bethesda)

Philip Roth: I, Nathan Zuckerman, have concluded that McDonald's irresistible Quarter Pounder With Cheese—goydom's slap in the face that conspicuously mixes meat and cheese—is actually part of the grand conspiracy of holydom. It was cooked up by the very same Talmudic scholars who invented the shiksa as the ultimate forbidden fruit. To be lusted after. Pursued. And, in ultimo, consumed, in order to continue the race.
(Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

Jane Austen: I cannot like it. Modesty forbids me to name the item; suffice it to say, it is a delicacy with which the diner can never be too unfamiliar.
(Wendy Lindboe, Glenn Dale)

James Joyce: Yes I said yes. Time for a nice scream. Algid slipslop of vanillasap.

Sweetfrostmulch. Cold slurpsoup. Coolpap desert. Brought by a commodious van from scraggy parlour to swerve of scrotumtightening seabeach by the Missis Sip Livia. Not my cup of tea. Yapyapyap. Can't walk to the pier to peer. Ha. Venal vanilla of Valhalla. Can I speak plainer? Turned on her heels. Iced-scream. Whole affair a terrible mistake.
(John O'Byrne, Dublin)

Raymond Chandler: The dame at the candy counter asked me if I knew what I wanted yet. I told her that I'd known what I wanted since I was 12 years old, but today I'd just take the SweetTARTS. And put them on The Post's tab, I added. She was impressed. She batted her baby blues. "The New York Post?" She was stupid, too. I liked that. I popped one of the candies into my mouth. "What do you think?" she asked. "It reminds me of you," I said. She giggled like a schoolgirl. "You mean sweet?" I said. "No, a tart." I was right.
(Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

Ogden Nash:
A foul thing is smoked beef rectum
Pity those who must inspect 'em.
(Lloyd Duvall, Roslyn, Pa.)

◆ The Uncle's Pick:
The Uncle of the Style Invitational:
I knew the moment I saw it that "smoked" was the winning word to describe this delicious product. It combines "smoked," which signifies that this is cured beef, and "dork," which describes how I feel every time someone sees me struggling to open the vacuum packaging with my teeth.
(Joseph Romm, Washington)

The Uncle Explains: I knew the moment I saw it that "smoked" was the winning word to describe this delicious product. It combines "smoked," which signifies that this is cured beef, and "dork," which describes how I feel every time someone sees me struggling to open the vacuum packaging with my teeth.